

file 3-1


DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE
Security Committee

SECOM-D-699

31 OCT 1979

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chairman, Unauthorized Disclosure Investigation
Working Group

FROM:


Executive Secretary

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SUBJECT:

Control of Unauthorized Disclosures

1. Attached is a good address by the DCI on leaks. Published in his 23 October 1979 "Notes from the Director" and directed primarily to CIA employees, the contents have wider application and are relevant to interests of your Subcommittee.

2. I suggest that you bring the article to the attention of your members for consideration in making its substance generally available within intelligence elements of their departments and agencies.

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Attachment

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 (10/31/79)

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Notes from the Director

No. 49

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23 October 1979

QUESTIONS ABOUT SECURITY LEAKS

I continue to be asked about security leaks. Because the damage being done to the country's intelligence capabilities and security by the continuing flow of leaks is a matter of concern to each of us, I would like to address some of the recurring questions I receive.

One of these is: "Who leaks? Is it us? The Defense Department? State? The Congress?" In my opinion, there is no evidence that any particular organization leaks more than any other. Perhaps at one time, or on one subject, a particular department or agency is most likely the guilty party, but there is no evidence that one organization is more guilty than others over the long run.

Leaks can be broken into two categories—those which result from *carelessness* and those which are *deliberate*.

Carelessness. One form of carelessness is failure to comply with the prescribed rules for handling classified material. Shortcuts such as "talking around a problem" or "doubletalking" on an unclassified telephone, failure to keep classified material under required control, or not ensuring that everyone privy to a conversation has the requisite clearances all can contribute to leaks. Even though such breaches of procedure may have only a small probability of leading to an actual leak, cumulatively they are the source of many of our problems. Another form of carelessness is being entrapped by the media. The standard ploy is for a member of the media to pretend that he knows the whole of some story and then ask you about some detail of it. What you disclose may seem to be marginal and incomplete but good journalists play this game repeatedly until they have pieced together what should be highly classified material. Many individuals are entrapped because they want to feel important by showing that they are knowledgeable on a subject. The irony is that if the newsman did not believe they were knowledgeable to begin with he probably would not have asked the question. Others feel compelled to "set the record straight." In either case, the individual proves nothing by answering except that he can't be trusted to keep classified information.

Deliberateness. Espionage is, of course, the most pernicious type of deliberate, unauthorized disclosure. Beyond that, there are individuals who deliberately leak classified information to influence events or policy formulation. Sometimes they are giving official background briefings and say more than is authorized. Sometimes they feel the only way to further some program or to kill it is to bring the pressure of the media to bear. They achieve this, then, by leaking classified information to the public.

It is my strong conviction that the only way we will correct the problem of both carelessness and deliberate leaks is first for each of us to attempt to improve security procedures and consciousness in our own office. If we blame the problem of leaks on the Congress, or the White House, or the Defense Department or anyone else, and stop looking for ways to make our own operations more secure, there will never be improvement. Yes, there are lots of problems outside of our control; but as we attempt to encourage corrective action on them, we must set the example right here at home.

Another question that frequently comes up is: "Isn't it more difficult today for CIA employees to adhere to the rules of security since we have a policy of greater openness with the public?" Some people feel that it was easier for us when we didn't talk about our work at all.

It is no more difficult today for each of us to observe proper security than it ever was. In fact, there never was a time when nothing was unclassified or when we did not talk about our work at all. Our government instituted a policy of periodic downgrading of classified information to unclassified many years ago. We have always had to be acutely aware of the distinction between what is classified and what is unclassified, and we have never discussed classified material in public, be it "Confidential" or "Top Secret." Today is no different.

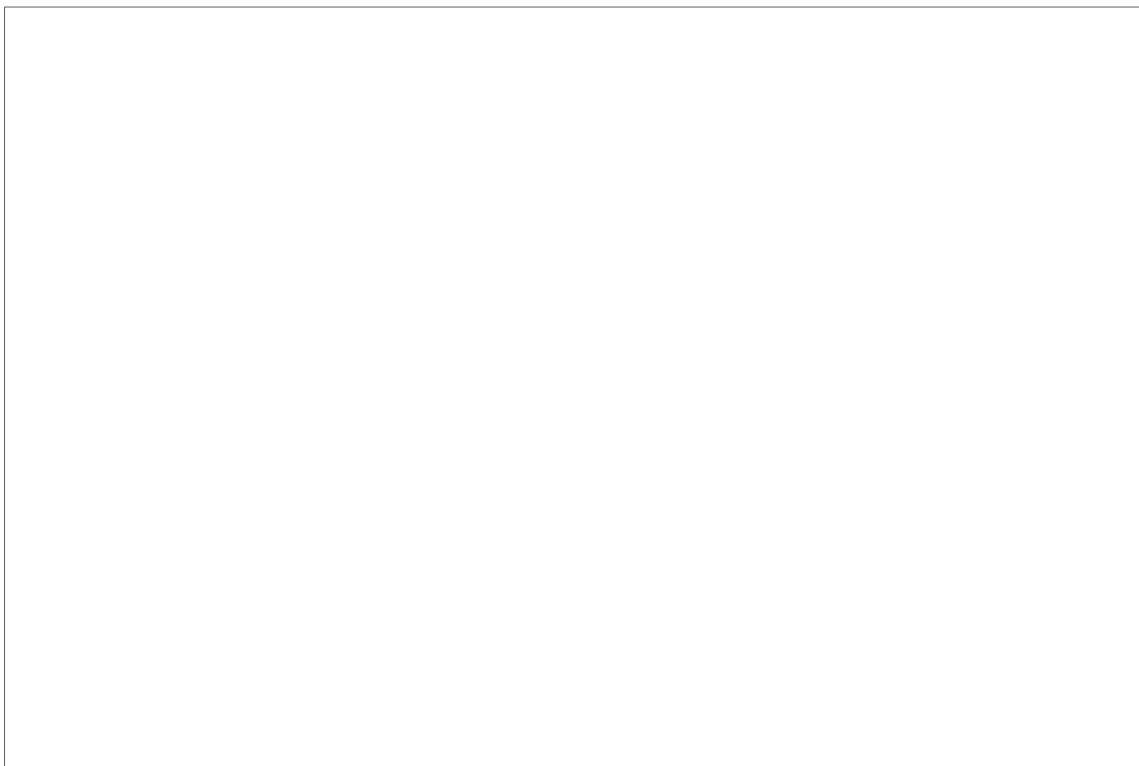
Sometimes I am asked how to distinguish between what is "sensitive" and what is not. The term "sensitive" has no meaning in our security classification structure. We should never be fooled into thinking that because someone judges a piece of classified information as not being sensitive it is permissible to discuss it in public. All classified information is sensitive from the point of view of how it affects our national security, or it should not be classified. When we come across information that we think no longer needs to be classified we should argue for declassification, but we cannot have individuals making that declassification on their own without reference to the original classifier. There may be valid reasons for continued classification which are not apparent.

What *is* different today is that the public and the media are much more interested in our activities and much more persevering in looking into them than ever before. These questions and probing are not something which we can control nor is it something that is likely to go away. But we *can* control how we respond. I have heard the charge that with the controlled openness there is some confusion about who can represent the Agency with the media. I remind people who make that charge that the Director of Public Affairs remains the designated spokesman for the Central Intelligence Agency. As our Legislative Counsel deals with Congress and our General Counsel deals with the courts and judiciary, so the Public Affairs Office deals with the public and the media. There need be no confusion. *The rules which govern Agency employees' responses to the media have not changed. With the exception of purely social contact, they are prohibited. CIA employees are prohibited from taking phone calls or having meetings with members of the media on matters of intelligence unless they are specifically authorized by the Public Affairs Office.* Social contact, however, is where entrapment is most likely and can be a particularly difficult problem. What appears to be an innocent social conversation can quickly turn into deft probing.

In sum, our openness has always been a carefully controlled openness; controlled by those who are authorized to deal with the media; bounded by a firm and very clear dividing line separating what is classified from what may be discussed in an open

forum; and bounded by a strict adherence to all of the established security procedures. These boundaries have always existed. Nothing has changed them. Each of us needs to take special care to continue observing them.

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STANSFIELD TURNER
Director